

46. 'Sensualisch', translated here as 'sensual' means 'what is according to the *sensus*' or the inner meaning of things or words.
47. *Mysterium Magnum*, 28:53.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid., 22:50.
50. *Von der Gnaden-Wahl*, 12:39.
51. *Mysterium Magnum*, 27:36.
52. Ibid., 31:21.
53. *Vom dreyfachen Leben des Menschen*, 16:30.
54. Ibid., 5:85.
55. *Von der Gnaden-Wahl*, 11:2. Man's identity consists in the oneness of the 'word of the mouth' and the 'word in the heart'.
56. There is a striking parallel between Boehme's care for the right word and Confucius' concern for the 'rectification of Language' as described in *Analects*, 13:3.

The Problem of Self in Buddhist Philosophy

Hajime Nakamura

The Problem of Self in Indian Tradition

When we attempt an overall discussion on the problem of the self or the individual, one stumbling block in the way of synoptical understanding is the general assumption that Buddhism did not admit the existence of an ego or a self, whereas Hindu philosophy in general admitted the self (*ātman*). They seem to contradict each other. When we examine the tradition of India, we notice that at the core of Hindu thought is found the concept of the self (*ātman*) as an independent, everlasting entity regulating both the physiological and the psychological functioning of an individual.

The Sanskrit original for self is *ātman*, which etymologically derives from the same origin as German *atmen*, *Odem* or Greek *atmos* (meaning air). As can be seen from this etymological investigation, *ātman* originally meant 'breath', then it came to mean 'soul', and finally 'self'. This development of the meaning of the word '*ātman*' is parallel to that of the Greek word 'psyche'. However, in India the 'Self' was identified with *Brahman*, the absolute, in the philosophy of the Upaniṣads and the Vedānta school. (Such an identification did not occur in the West.)

Moreover, in the scriptures of early Buddhism we come across a variety of notions of the self. In a scripture (the *Brahmajāla-sutta*, ND), sixty-two different heretical postulations regarding the doctrine of the self

were thoroughly analyzed and then refuted. Among these, eighteen were seen to arise due to ignorance of the past, and forty-two due to that of the future. For example, the 'Eternalists' characterize the soul and the world as eternal; to others, who are in some respects 'eternalists' and in other respects 'Non-Eternalists', the soul and the world are partly eternal and partly non-eternal; the 'Semi-Eternalists' consider the soul and the world as semi-eternal; the 'Extentionists' believe in the finity and infinity of the world; the 'Eelwrigglers' present misleading statements and do not stick to any specific point (they seem to have been sceptics); the 'Fortuitous-Originists' hold the view that the soul and world originate without a cause; 'Believers in Future Life' think that the soul after death is conscious. Some maintain that the soul after death is unconscious; others hold the uncommitted view that the soul is neither conscious nor unconscious; the 'Annihilists' believe in the annihilation of the soul on the dissolution of the body; and finally, the believers in the 'Theory of Happiness in This Life', think of the complete liberation of the soul in this world.¹

Moreover, according to a scripture, three forms of personality are commonly acknowledged in the world:

... material, immaterial, and formless. The first has form, is made up of the four elements, and is nourished by solid food. The second has no form, is made up of mind, has all its greater and lesser limbs complete, and all the organs perfect. The third is without form, and is made up of consciousness only.²

The Theory of Non-self (Anātman) in Early Buddhism

The teaching of non-ego (*anātman*, non-self *anattā*), has been regarded as characteristic of Buddhist thought. The Buddha did not assume any metaphysical substance; this attitude was logically derived from his fundamental standpoint.

The transient character of this present world is emphasized in Buddhism to such an extent that it has come to include not only what man observes around him, but man himself; the whole of man, not excepting what he may call his 'self'.³ The Buddha reduces things, substances, souls, to forces, movements, functions, and processes, and adopts a dynamic conception of reality. Admitting the transitoriness of everything, Buddhists do not assume any metaphysical substances.

The self, according to the orthodox Indian interpretations, is permanent, substantial, and impervious to change. It remains firm, unshaken,

immutable, and identical amidst all kinds of change. On the other hand, nothing that is experienced has a self,⁴ because impermanence and unsubstantiality are the very nature of things. "Impermanent are compounded things."⁵

Early Buddhists at first set forth the teaching that, since everything is transient, one should not cling to anything in the objective world. Nothing should be regarded as 'mine' (*mama*) or 'belonging to me'. One should not consider anything as 'one's own' or 'one's property'; one should have no attachment to anything. Everything which is considered to be 'one's own' changes constantly and, therefore, does not belong to any particular person permanently. Possessiveness of selfishness (*mamatta* 'mine-ness') was thus rejected. This teaching was set forth in the oldest poems⁶ of the scriptures, and was shared by Early Jains.⁷ There was no theoretical ratiocination.

A little later, however, the theory of Non-ego was developed more systematically, as can be seen in the prose sections of Pāli scriptures, which contend that life is nothing but a series of manifestations of becomings and extinctions, a stream of becoming and change. Buddhists repudiated the popular delusion of the individual ego, and of the individual ego as a substance. The objects with which we identify ourselves are not the true self; our fortune, our social position, our family, our body, and even our mind are not our true self. In this sense, the Buddhist theory can be called 'the theory of Non-self', i.e., *anything perceived is not the self*. All the theories about 'souls' (introduced in Section I) are discussed and rejected in the scriptures.⁸ In their place, Buddhists advocated 'the theory of Non-ego or Non-soul'.

The 'ego' or 'soul' is the English translation of Pāli '*attan*', Sanskrit '*ātman*', which is more literally rendered 'self'.⁹ Occasionally, however, we should use the word 'ego' in order to distinguish 'ego' from the 'true self' stressed in Early Buddhism. There is nothing permanent, and if the permanent deserves to be called the self or *ātman*, then nothing on earth is self. Everything is non-self (*anattā*).¹⁰ This is the theory of *nairātmya*.

The relation of reasoning among propositions in canonical literatures is as follows:

(1) Everything is impermanent (*anicca*); (2) Anything that is impermanent is suffering (dissatisfactory) (*dukkha*); and (3) Anything that is suffering (dissatisfactory) is not myself i.e., 'non-self' (*anattā*).

The above-mentioned relationship is often repeated in canonical literature. Later the theory of 'non-self' came to mean 'non-substantiality'.

To make clear the teaching of non-ego, Buddhists, as is seen in the

scriptures, set forth the theory of the Five Aggregates or Constituents (*skandhas*)¹¹ of our human individual existence—the total of our mind and body. The five aggregates, then, make up the individual. These Five Aggregates or Constituents are:

- | | |
|--|---------|
| REALITY | FICTION |
| 1. Form (= matter) (<i>rūpa</i>) ¹² | Self |
| 2. Feeling (pleasant, unpleasant, neutral) (<i>vedanā</i>) ¹³ | |
| 3. Perceptions (sight, etc.) (<i>saṃjñā</i>) ¹⁴ | |
| 4. Impulses (greed, hate, faith, wisdom, etc.) (<i>saṃskāra</i>) ¹⁵ | |
| 5. Consciousness (<i>viññāna</i>) ¹⁶ | |

In order to make this teaching slightly more tangible, we may cite the example of toothache. Normally, one simply says "I have a toothache." But to the Buddhist thinkers this is a very inconsistent way of speaking, for neither 'I', nor 'have', nor 'toothache' are counted among the ultimate facts of existence (*dharma*s). In Buddhist literature personal expressions are replaced by impersonal ones. Impersonally, in terms of ultimate events, this experience is divided up into:

1. There is the physical *form*, i.e., the tooth as matter;
2. There is a painful *feeling*;
3. There is a sight-, touch-, and pain-perception (ideation) of the tooth; perception can exist only as ideation;
4. There are by way of *volitional* reactions, resentment at pain, desire for physical well-being, etc;
5. There is consciousness—an awareness of all the above-mentioned four.¹⁷

The 'I' of ordinary talk has thus disappeared: it is not the ultimate reality. Not even its components are reality. One might reply, of course: an imagined 'I' is a part of the actual experience. In that case, it would be placed in the category of consciousness, the last one of the five mentioned above. But this consciousness is not ultimate reality, for our human experience is only a composite of the five aggregates (*skandhas*). None of the Five Aggregates is the self or soul, nor can we locate the self or soul in any of them. A person is in process of continuous change, with no fixed underlying entity. In this way Buddhism swept away the traditional conception of a substance called 'soul' or 'ego' which had hitherto dominated the minds of the superstitious and the intellectuals alike. Instead, the teaching of *anattā*, non-self, has been held throughout Buddhism. The constituents of a person are not elements or entities as exist in the outer world; they are of provisional reality. Once one attains enlightenment by true wisdom, the constituents of a person are brought to the state where

they do not operate. Thus, they might be called 'realms', (or 'functions', from another viewpoint). Buddhism believes that our existence is maintained and formed in the area of the five 'components' of a person. Our existence is formed in the areas of these five different classes of provisional functions. The combination of everything that exists in such realms is provisionally called 'self', or 'I' (*ātman*) from the worldly, conventional point of view, but the subject of human existence cannot be included in any of the above-mentioned realms. With regard to material things (the first of the five) Buddhism propounds: material things are impermanent; what is impermanent is suffering; what is suffering is not one's self; it is something other than oneself. What is not oneself does not belong to oneself; in it one's self does not exist; it is not one's *ātman*. The same argument is set forth regarding the other four constituents: feelings, ideations, impulses, and consciousness. Everything that worldly people consider to be *ātman* is not *ātman* at all.

Thus, the Buddha explained¹⁸ the nonperceptibility of the soul:

The physical form is not the eternal soul, for it is subject to destruction. Neither feeling, nor ideation, nor impulses, nor consciousness, together constitute the eternal soul, for if it were so, feeling, etc., would not likewise tend towards destruction.¹⁹

In another passage it is taught:

Our physical form, feeling, perception, impulses and consciousness are all transitory, and therefore not permanent [and not good]. That which is transitory, suffering, and liable to change, is not the eternal soul. So, it must be said of all physical forms whatever past, present, or to be; subjective or objective; far or near; high or low: "This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my eternal soul."²⁰

Body, feeling, perception, impulses, and consciousness—all these are impermanent and suffering (dissatisfactory). They are all 'non-self'. Nothing of them is substantial; they are all appearances empty of substantiality or reality. There can be no individuality without a putting together of components, for this is always a process of 'becoming': this is becoming different; and there can be no becoming different without a dissolution, a passing away, or decay.

Besides the theory of the Five Constituent Aggregates, early Buddhists set forth a theory of systems of 'realms' in which our cognitions and actions are formed. They are the sense of visual function, the sense of hearing, the sense of smell, the sense of taste, the sense of touch, and mind. They are called the Six Realms (or Situations). At the same time, corresponding to these six, another system of 'Realms' was established. This is

the system of the Realms of the Six Objects, which include: visual forms, sounds, odors, tastes, things touched, and things thought. In living human existence there is a continually succeeding series of mental and physical phenomena, and it is the union of these phenomena that makes the individual. Every person, or thing, is therefore put together, a compound of components which change. In each individual, without exception, the relation of its components is always that no sooner has individuality begun, than its dissolution, disintegration, also begins.

Many Buddhist terms are very difficult to translate into English. For certain technical terms there are no exact equivalents, and so terms used in Western languages can only give a rough understanding of Buddhist teaching on this subject. However, the purport of this theory is rather simple. In daily life, we assume that something is ours, or that we are something, or that something is ourselves; but this is wrong. Buddhism denies the assumption of the existence of *ātman* as a metaphysical principle; hence this Buddhist theory is called the theory of 'non-self'. However, it never denies *ātman* itself. It merely insists that any object which can be seen in the objective world is not *ātman*. Regarding the question whether *ātman* exists or not, Buddhism gives no answer, neither affirming nor denying the existence of *ātman*. The Buddha exhorts us to be philosophical enough to recognize the limits of philosophy. As *body* (corporeality) is a name for a system of functions, even so *soul* is a name for the sum of the states which constitute our mental existence. Without functions no soul can be admitted. Therefore, it is not correct to understand Buddhism as the theory of the nonexistence of soul.

The Practical Implication of the Non-self Theory

If we apply this method of analytical reflection properly, it has a tremendous power to disintegrate unwholesome, selfish tendencies. Early and later conservative (*Hīnayāna*) Buddhists strongly felt that the meditation on the component elements alone could not uproot all the evil in our hearts. They did, however, believe that it was bound to contribute to our spiritual development to the extent that, when repeated often enough, it would set up the habit of viewing all things impersonally, free from our selfish tendencies. This way of thinking may be applied with efficiency by modern psychiatrists.

In early Buddhism, those who got rid of the notion of 'ego' were highly praised. This kind of denial, however, did not mean nihilism or materi-

alism. The Buddha clearly told us what the self is not, but he did not give any clear account of what it is. It is quite wrong to think that there is no self at all according to Buddhism.

He among men, O Brahmin, who eschews
All claims of me and mine; he in whom thought
Rises in lonely calm, in piety rapt,
Loathing all foul things, dwelling in chastity—
Herein proficient, in such matters trained,
Mortal can reach th' immortal heav'n of Brahma.²¹

The Buddha did not, as a rule, dwell on illusion (*māyā*) in general as is done by most Hindu scholars, but dwelt on the concept or illusion of the ego. In the situation of *Nirvāṇa*, the ego cannot be noticed:

As a flame blown about by the violence of the wind goes out, and cannot be reckoned [as existing], even so a *Muni*, delivered from name and matter, [the 'self'] disappears, and cannot be reckoned [as existing].²²

The Buddha was not a mere materialist. Both in the West and in all Indian systems except Buddhism, souls and the gods are considered as exceptions to transiency. To these spirits is attributed a substantiality, a permanent individuality without change. But the Buddha did not want to assume all these exceptional substances. In early Buddhism, traditional ideas were torn away from their ancestral stem and planted in a purely rational justification. Phenomenalistic doctrines were developed with great skill and brilliance.²³

The wandering monk Vacchagotta asked whether there is an ego or not. The Buddha was silent. Then that monk rose from his seat and went away. Then Ānanda asked the Buddha: "Wherefore, Sire, has the Exalted One not given an answer to the questions put by that monk?" The Buddha replied: "If I had answered, 'The Ego is,' then that would have confirmed the doctrine of those who believe in permanence. If I had answered: 'The Ego is not,' then that would have confirmed the doctrine of those who believe in annihilation."²⁴

The Buddha neither affirmed nor denied the existence of *ātman*. He urged people to be philosophical enough to recognize the limits of rationalization. The scope of philosophy was made clear. As 'body' is a name for a system of some functions, even so 'soul' is a name for the sum of the mental states which constitute our mind. Without such functions no soul can be admitted. Here again, it may be concluded, the Buddha was more concerned with the practical, ethical implications of the *an-attā* doctrine than with any metaphysical discussion of the subject—ethical implications which have been emphasized throughout Buddhist history. As we have

observed, he was concerned to eschew, in this respect, "all claims of me and mine."²⁵

The True Self—The Basis of Moral and Early Buddhism

If the reality of the self were doubted, the pursuit of moral ideas and of liberation would become meaningless and morality would be deprived of its basis. Self-realization is not possible if the self itself is denied.

The Buddha seems to have acknowledged the true self in our existence as it appears in our moral conduct conforming to universal norms. The Buddha did not want to assume the existence of souls as metaphysical substances, but he admitted the existence of the self as the subject of action in a practical and moral sense; thus the Non-self theory does not mean that the Buddha completely denied the significance of the self. He always admitted the significance of the self as the subject of actions in the moral and practical sense. According to the Buddha, the self cannot be identified with anything existing on the outside; we cannot grasp the self as something concrete or existing in the outer world. He cuts off identification with all objects in turn by the thought, "I am not this, this is not mine, this is not myself."

The self is not experienced at all. The true self in one's existence can be realized only when we act in conformance to universal norms of human existence; when we act morally, the true self becomes manifest. In this connection the self of Buddhism is not a metaphysical entity, but a practical postulate: *ātman* as the basis of human acts.

In early Buddhism 'one who knows the self'²⁶ was highly esteemed, and the virtue of relying upon oneself also was highly stressed. The Buddha taught his disciples in his last sermon:

Be a lamp to yourself. Be a refuge to yourself. Betake yourself to no external refuge. Hold fast to the Truth as a lamp. Hold fast as a refuge to the Truth. Do not look for refuge to anyone (anything else) besides yourself.²⁷

One's self should be ennobled. A man who is devoted to religious practice is extolled as follows: "He thus abstaining, lives his life void of cravings, perfected, cool, in blissful enjoyment, his whole self ennobled."²⁸ It means: "Depend on the self (*ātman*). Depend on the law (*dharma*). Make the self a candlelight. Make the law a candlelight." He thought that the true self should be expressed whenever human law is practiced. The Buddha asked a group of young men who were searching for a missing woman: "Which is better for you, to go seeking the woman, or to go

seeking the self?;" he did not say 'your selves'. This means he did not think that each individual had its own self as an entity.²⁹ The above-cited statements imply that there are two selves. One is the empirical self in daily life, and the other is the Self in the higher sense. The former should be subdued: "If a man were to conquer in battle a thousand times a thousand men, and another conquer one, himself, he indeed is the greatest of conquerors."³⁰ "If a man holds himself dear, let him diligently watch himself."³¹

The empirical self has to be guided, tamed, and liberated from bondage.

The self is the lord of self; who else could be the lord?
With self well subdued a man finds a lord who is difficult to obtain.³²

The evil done by oneself, born of oneself, produced by oneself,
crushes the fool even as a diamond breaks a precious stone.³³

The self, i.e., the empirical self, should be trained ethically with a view to achieving a wholesome development and perfection:

Rouse your self by your self, examine your self by your self.
Thus guarded by your self and attentive, you, mendicant, will live happy.³⁴
For self is the lord of self; self is their refuge of self; therefore curb your self
even as a merchant curbs a fine horse.³⁵

The whole wide world we traverse with our thought,
Finding, to man naught dearer than the self,
Since aye so dear the self to others is
Let the self-lover harm no other men.³⁶

One should know himself that he is not wise enough. "The fool who knows his foolishness, is wise at least so far. But a fool who thinks himself wise, he is called a fool indeed."³⁷ So we may be able to conclude that the realization of *Nirvāṇa* can be explained as taking refuge in one's true self. On this point the Buddha's assertion comes to be very similar to that of the Upaniṣads and the Vedānta philosophy (*paramātman*, Supreme Self). But the latter's self (*ātman*) is rather metaphysical, while the Buddha's self is genuinely practical. Based upon this thought, Mahāyāna Buddhism developed the theory of the 'Great Self'.³⁸ The attitude of eliminating one's own selfishness means lifting up the barriers between oneself and others. In this state of mind all living beings in the universe are identified with oneself. This ideal was expressed with the term 'the Self of All' (*sabbattatā*).³⁹

In a canon of the scripture of early Buddhism the practice of the meditation of the Four Sublime States (*brahma-vihāras*) is encouraged. The sentences read:

He lets his mind pervade one quarter of the world with thoughts of Love (*mettā-sahagatena cetasā*), and so the second, and so the third, and so the fourth. And thus the whole world, above, below, around, and everywhere, with the feeling that all the world is his self (*sabbattatāya*), does he continue to pervade with heart of Love, far-reaching, grown great, and beyond measure . . . and he lets his mind pervade one quarter of the world with thought of pity (*karunā*), . . . sympathy (*muditā*), . . . equanimity (*upekkhā*), and so the second, and so the third, and so the fourth. And thus the whole wide world, above, below, around, and everywhere, with the feeling that all the world is his self (*sabbattatāya*), does he continue to pervade with heart of pity . . . sympathy . . . equanimity, far-reaching, grown great, and beyond measure.⁴⁰

The mental attitude to regard all the world (including other human beings) as one's self is closely related to the ethical virtues of love, pity, sympathy, and equanimity. This mental attitude, however, does not imply the thought that one's self is identical with the Universal Self as the metaphysical substance as was held by Upaniṣadic and Vedāntic thinkers. It is of ethical and practical implication. From this attitude emerges the thought: "I am a friend of all. I am a companion of all."⁴¹ This thought harbingers the formation of the idea of the 'Great Self'.

To summarize: The Non-self theory in early Buddhism does not mean that the Buddha completely denied the significance of the self. According to the Buddha, the self cannot be identified with anything existing on the outside; we cannot grasp the self as something concrete. The self can be realized only when we act according to universal norms of human existence; when we act morally, the true self becomes manifest. The Buddha did not want to assume the existence of souls as metaphysical substances, but he admitted the existence of the self as the subject of action in the practical and moral sense. 'One who knows the self' is highly esteemed.⁴²

We would say that in early Buddhism two kinds of self are virtually admitted. The first is the empirical self of ordinary daily life, and the other is the latent self in the practical sense. The empirical self should be subdued, tamed, and disciplined. This means that a change in the structure of ego occurs by means of disciplinary practice in various traditions. The second, the latent self, which might be called the fundamental self, is the nonperceivable subject, which can be observed in terms of human behavior. It is not an entity in the objective world, but it can be manifested through human subjective actions.

The latent self was called 'the lord of self'. "The Self is the lord of self; who else could be the lord? With self well subdued, a man finds a lord such as few can find." One should be earnest in carrying out own's

duty, in compliance with the demand of the true self. Further, to be true to oneself comes to be the same as to be true to others. In early Buddhism to control oneself was regarded as the starting point for altruistic activities.

The Modification of the Non-self Theory

This theory of Non-self was modified in later days. Hīnayāna teachers explained the theory as follows: Things are nothing but names. 'Chariot' is a name as much as 'Nāgasena' (the name of a Buddhist elder). There exists nothing real beneath the properties or events. The immediate data of consciousness do not argue the existence of any unity which we can imagine. In like argumentation, Nāgasena drew a negative inference that there was no soul⁴³ from the silent attitude of the Buddha on the problem of the soul. This opinion became the orthodox teaching of Hīnayāna Buddhism. The teaching of the Buddha himself, however, seems to have been slightly different, as has been shown above. From the investigation we have done so far, it is clear that the assertion of the denial of the ego appeared in a later period.⁴⁴ The Buddha did not necessarily deny the soul, but was silent concerning it. Moreover, he seems to have acknowledged what might be called a 'true self' which appears in our moral conduct conforming to universal norms.

According to early Buddhism an individual existence is nothing but an uninterrupted and unbroken series of psychical states which are called *dhammas*.⁴⁵ In this case *dhammas* mean constituent elements of the direct experience of one individual at one moment. In the philosophy of the Sarvāstivādins these *dhammas* were regarded as a discrete and existent entities. In ancient India, belief in rebirth or transmigration was generally current, and this conception was associated with the doctrine of *karma* (literally 'act', 'deed'), according to which good conduct brings a pleasant and happy result, while bad conduct brings an evil result. The *karma* committed previously will come to fruition, either in this life or in future lives. These concepts were adopted by Buddhists. However, this acceptance gave rise to a difficult problem: how can rebirth take place without a permanent subject which is reborn?

The relation between existences in rebirth has been explained by the analogy of fire which maintains itself unchanged in appearance, yet is different in every moment. In order to solve this vulnerable problem, some Buddhists of later days assumed a sort of soul, calling it by different names (e.g. *pudgala*, which means 'person').⁴⁶ In the discussions between

the Theravādins and the Pudgalavādins, the latter held to the permanent and abiding character of the self, considering the self as real. They denied the Theravādins' assertion that 'the person' is known in the sense of a provisional fact.⁴⁷

Following this controversy, Nāgārjuna declared his theory based upon his standpoint of the Middle Path: "The self is neither different from the constituent functions nor identical to them; the *ātman* without constituent functions does not exist nor does it not not exist."⁴⁸ This Middle Path means the negation of both extremes. This is ascertained firmly, while the theory of existence of the individual (*satkāyadṛṣṭi*) is refuted.⁴⁹ This tendency finally gave rise to the conception of the fundamental consciousness (*ālaya-vijñāna*) of the Yogācāra (or Vijñānavāda) School in Mahāyāna. As early Buddhism did not deny the self in the ethical sense, Mahāyāna developed the concept of *Buddha-nature* latent in everyone. Based upon this thought, Mahāyāna Buddhism developed the concept of the 'Great Self'.⁵⁰ Some teachers overtly and defiantly criticized the theory of Non-self in early Buddhism. The concept of the 'Great Self' was especially emphasized in the *Mahā-parinirvāṇa-sūtra* of Mahāyāna, extant only in Chinese, and then generally admitted in Vajrayāna texts. This is not found in Conservative Buddhism, and is criticized by some as being very close to Vedānta philosophy. However, this idea is generally held by Chinese, Korean, and Japanese Buddhists.⁵¹

The Standpoint of the Philosophy of Voidness to Transcend the Extremes of self and Non-self

In Mahāyāna, especially in the Mādhyamika school founded by Nāgārjuna, the theory of Non-self became interpreted in a slightly different way. In this school non-self (*nairātmya*) meant 'without self-nature' or 'without self-existence', 'without essence', and this was explained as 'the true nature of being'. Teachers of this school set forth two kinds of non-self. First is the 'non-self' of 'an individual existence' (or of soul), which is tantamount to 'the nonexistence of the individual existence as a substance' (*pudgalanairātmya*), which theory was maintained by the Hīnayāna schools.

The other kind of 'non-self' is 'the non-self of the constituent elements of the individual existence' (*dharmā-nairātmya*), a theory which was newly set forth by Mahāyāna teachers. Things being so, 'non-self' in this school is almost the same as 'non-substance', 'substancelessness'; this is

equal to 'voidness' (*śūnyatā*). The concept of self (*ātman*) in this sense was severely analysed and criticized by Nāgārjuna in the eighteenth chapter of a work called '*Mādhyamika-śāstra*'. When one tries to make the standpoint of voidness consistent, one is led to the conclusion that one should not adhere to the tenet that 'there is no ego'. Nāgārjuna boldly said: "The Buddhas have provisionally employed the term *ātman*; they have also the term *anātman* (non-self). They have also taught that there is no entity called *ātman* or *anātman*."⁵²

The standpoint of the Mādhyamika school transcends all opposites, therefore it cannot be refuted, as they asserted. It transcends both opposites of *ātman* and *anātman*. Here even the theory of Non-self is not of absolute significance, but of provisional value to bring one to enlightenment. Such a dialectical argumentation had already been set forth in Mahāyāna sūtras,⁵³ but Nāgārjuna makes this point clear.

The Realization of the True Self— The Discipline of Meditation

Then how shall we be able to realize the true self? This search brought about the practice of meditation, especially in the medieval East and also in the West. Meditation was essential to the contemplative life. The central theme of the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra* is 'knowing the true self'. It unfolds the *bodhicitta*, the primal nature of enlightenment. Zen Buddhists practiced Zen meditation, as the practitioners of the Hindu sect practiced Yoga, and Western mystics meditated on God. This point has been discussed by many scholars. The requirements for meditation were more or less the same in the various advanced religions. Practitioners need composure of mind, abstinence from sensual enjoyments, and perseverance in concentration of mind. They should practice in quietude.

Meditation in Zen Buddhism is called '*Zazen*' (i.e., sitting for meditation). It has biological and psychological effects. In the enlightened state of mind dualistic antagonisms, such as good and evil, or right and wrong, disappear. This state of mind may be compared to the fourth or ultimate condition of mind which is the awakened life of supreme consciousness, and which is set forth in the *Māṇḍūkya-Upaniṣad* and *Māṇḍūkya-Karīkās* of ancient India.

Zen Buddhism teaches intuitive knowledge of the absolute. A well-known motto of Zen, "Direct pointing to the mind of man," emphasizes that we originally have the Buddha-mind and need the actual experience

of it. That is, the master points to the Buddha-nature, or Reality itself. Enlightenment takes place in a 'timeless moment', i.e., outside time, in eternity; it is an act of the Absolute itself, not our own doing.

In medieval Japan, Master Dōgen made meditation the essential practice of Zen. "Why do you encourage others to practice meditation?" His answer: "This is the right gate to the teaching of the Buddha." "Meditation is the gate to comfort and happiness." He taught to "forget oneself." Dōgen said that practice and enlightenment are not two things but one. Enlightenment is not something to seek in the future because people are already at this moment in the world of enlightenment though they are not awakened to this fact. The innate Buddha-nature is the *a priori* basis of the practice which itself embodies enlightenment in the process of one's endeavor. Dōgen says: "In Buddhism practice and enlightenment are one and the same. Since practice has its basis in enlightenment, the practice even of the beginner contains the whole of original enlightenment."⁵⁴

Zen dispelled all kinds of ratiocination on the absolute. The Buddha dwells hidden in all inconspicuous things of daily life. To take them just as they come, is enlightenment. Justification of moral virtues is possible based on the fundamental supposition that we human beings are in our essence good and pure. In Zen Buddhism they say that "living beings are by origin (essentially) Buddhas."⁵⁵ After such consideration we are led to the conclusion that daily life is in itself the enlightened self, and the mind of ordinary people is in itself the Buddha's mind. The process of the phenomenal world is activity, mighty self-positing, a procreation not under the compulsion of laws or blind impulse but in the creative power and freedom of sublime wonder.

On the other hand, Asian thinkers who were highly interested in psychological analysis by way of self-reflection made value judgments on mental functions. Scholars of traditional Buddhism of ancient India, i.e., Abhidharmikas, and Buddhist idealists (*Vijñānavādins*) accepted some mental functions of the human mind as evil, some good, and others neither good nor evil. To illustrate: belief, courage, equanimity, modesty, shame, noncovetousness, non-hatred, noninjury, dexterity, endeavor—these ten mental functions are regarded as *always good* in the eyes of Buddhist psychologists. Anger, hypocrisy, envy, jealousy, approving objectionable things, causing harm, breaking friendship, deceit, trickery, complacency—these purely mental functions, which are of limited occurrence, are *always bad*. Feeling, sensation, perception, attention, memory, concentration, etc. are *neither good nor bad*, in themselves. This kind of scholarly

classification has been preserved up to the present time in some cathedrals and authoritative monasteries, as well as in prestiged temples of our ancient capital of Nara, such as the Horyūji, Yakushiji, and Kofuku-ji.

To seek one's self has also been a problem of Western thinkers; and it is likely that psychological study of Asia will give some clues to solve the problem of the self, the individual, and its psychological implications in the future. One could suggest that Asian ways of psychological approach will be justified in many respects. Among the various mental functions of the human mind, perception and various functions evolving from it may occur just like natural phenomena. But the movement of feelings and emotions must be quite different from that of natural phenomena. They do not move in the same way as movements of physical objects in the natural world.

Human feelings and emotions are often of utmost ethical and aesthetic significance. They can develop in different ways. The law of functioning of feelings and emotions, which is greatly tinged with ethical, aesthetic, and even religious implications in actual human life, will be effective only in the real sphere of activities of the human mind. Secondly, they can effectuate some results in some cases. The Sanskrit and Pali technical term for 'meditation' is *bhāvanā*, which derived from the word "to cause to be." It implies that, if one continues to meditate on the peaceful state of mind, one's own mind finally becomes quiet and peaceful. Mental process in terms of feelings and emotions is not a process of natural objects, but one which can result in transformation of our own personality. This way of evaluation has been quite conspicuous not only in Buddhism, but also in Asian thought in general.⁵⁶

The effects thereof may not be able to be measured so easily in terms of calculation by way of experiments. But this way of approach is especially needed in the present-day situation of spiritual confusion and chaos in which we are unavoidably placed.

Conclusion

According to the investigation conducted so far, we can say that, although we can locate some common features in various theories of Non-self, there existed a variety of teachings on that problem, teachings that were not always consistent and that occasionally were contradictory to each other. What, then, is the genuinely authentic teaching?

We need not be particular with it. All sorts of teaching of 'non-self' were set forth for the purpose of eliminating the deep-rooted selfishness in

our individual existence and of realizing loving-kindness among ourselves. If a teaching was useful for the purpose, it was admitted. Thus the teaching of 'non-self' was not necessarily a tenet, but an expediency.

Notes

1. T. W. Rhys Davids, trans., *Dialogues of the Buddha*, Part 1, *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, vol. 2 (Reprint, London: 1956), pp. 26–54.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 259–260.
3. "In part the difficulty in understanding the teaching of annattā is due to the difficulty of translating the original basic terms into Western languages." (H. Nakamura: *Buddhism in Comparative Light*, in press).
4. *Sabbe dhammā anattā* (*Dhammapada*, v. 279).
5. *Sabbe saṃkhārā aniccā*.
6. This thought is especially clear in the poems of the *Suttanipāta*.
7. This is most clear in the first half of the *Āyārāṅga*.
8. *Dīgha-Nikāya* 1.
9. The Indian philosophers spoke of personality in the ethical and psychological sense with the term 'Self' (*ātman* in Sanskrit), whereas Confucius seems to have held that habit makes up a personality. Although both theories are of utmost psychological significance, the Indian way of approach to the individual was rather metaphysical, whereas the Chinese way was rather practical or behavioristic.
10. The term *anattā* is defined as follows: "Non-recognition of the existence of soul regarded as imperishable according to orthodox Hindu philosophy." (S. C. Banerji, *An Introduction to Pāli Literature*, p. 140); "non-ego: absence of a permanent, unchanging self or soul, substanceless." (K. W. Morgan: *The Path of the Buddha*, p. 407).
11. Or it might be translated as 'constituent aggregates'. "*Khandha*: a part of a whole thing, ingredients of the worldly existence; the constituents of the individual; form, feeling, notion, mental dispositions, clear consciousness or discrimination." (S. C. Banerji. *An Introduction to Pāli Literature*, p. 141). *pañcaskandha* in Sanskrit, *go-un* or *go-on* in Japanese.
12. In many cases 'physical form' (*rūpa*) (*shiki* in Japanese) means 'physical form pertaining to the body' or 'the body of a human being'. Occasionally it is rendered as 'matter', a rough translation. According to interpretations by later Abhidharma teachers, it can mean 'matter', including everything both spiritual and material. Spiritual effects also were regarded as a kind of 'latent matter'.
13. *Vedanā* (*ju* in Japanese). There are three kinds of feeling, i.e., pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral. Later teachers of Abhidharma and China interpreted it as 'feeling, signifying the acceptance of impression within one's consciousness'.
14. *Samjñā* (*sō* in Japanese), ideation, meaning: to form an image within one's consciousness, according to the *Abhidharmika* and Chinese dogmatists. The Pāli word *sañña* is occasionally translated as 'consciousness'. Consciousness is

the concept closest to the concept of 'self' or 'soul'. However, early Buddhists made a distinction. To the question: "Is the consciousness (*sañña*) identical with a man's soul (*atta*), or is consciousness one thing, and the soul another?" The Buddha replied, "Granting a material soul, having form, built up of the four elements, nourished by solid food; still some ideas, some stages of consciousness, would arise to the man, and others would pass away. On this account also, you can see how consciousness must be one thing, and soul another." (T. W. Rhys Davids, trans., *Dialogues of the Buddha*, Part 1, pp. 252–53).

15. *Samkāra* (*gyō* in Japanese) is a difficult term to translate. 'The confections' (T. W. Rhys Davids); 'the predispositions' (Warren); 'the constituent elements of character' (T. W. Rhys Davids). When we consider the interpretations by later Abhidharma and Chinese teachers, we can translate it as 'latent, formative, phenomena' or 'formative forces, including activeness and latent formative forces'. *Samkhāra* is explained by A. K. Warder: *Introduction to Pāli* (Luzac, 1963), p. 277, as follows: "Force, energy, activity, combination, process, instinct, habit (a very difficult word to find an exact equivalent for: 'force', with a restricted technical sense attached to it, is probably the best. *Samkhāra* means force or forces manifested in the combination of atoms into all the things in the universe, in the duration of such combination—as in the life-span of a living being—and in the instincts and habits of living beings, which are to be allayed by the practice of meditation (*jhāna*). It is one of the five basic groups (*khandha*) of kinds of things in the universe: matter, sensation, perception and consciousness being the others)."

16. *Vijñāna*, (*shiki* in Japanese). Later Abhidharmika and Chinese teachers interpreted it as 'cognition' denoting the act of distinguishing every object and recognizing it.

17. These illustrations were taken from E. Conze's *Buddhism*. cf. *Samyutta-Nikāya* 3.46 etc.

18. In the Buddha's allegedly first sermon addressed to the five ascetics in Benares, (*Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta*), the nonperceptibility of the soul was set forth.

19. Or it can be translated as: "it is subject to destruction."

20. *Vinaya*, *Mahāvagga* 1.6.38f; 1:13f; *Vinaya*, *Mahāvagga* 1.21. cf. *Samyutta-Nikāya* 4.54.

21. *Dīgha-Nikāya* 2:241, *gāthā*.

22. *Suttavipāta* 1073.

23. In Greece, Heraclitus had very similar ideas, and similar ideas are found in post-Buddhist Indian works also (*Kāthakopaniṣad* 2.10; *Bhagavadgītā* 2.14; 9.33); but in neither case are they worked out in the same uncompromising way. In European and in all Indian systems, except the Buddhist, souls and the gods are considered as exceptions to the rule of transience. To these spirits is attributed a substantiality, an individuality without change. But in Early Buddhism, phenomenalistic doctrines were developed with great skill and brilliance.

24. H. C. Warren. *Buddhism in Translation*, op. cit., p. 134.